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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 000510

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/24/2018
TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: JAPAN: SECOND SURVEY OF IRAQ DEPLOYMENT
REQUIREMENTS

REF: STATE 4865

Classified By: Ambassador J.T. Schieffer for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Japan has yet to seriously begin considering what actions it will take with regard to the Air Self Defense Force (ASDF) presence it has deployed in Kuwait following the expiration of MNF-I's mandate on December 31. It is likely that the basic plan governing this deployment will be renewed by the Cabinet when it expires this July, but what Japan will do after December 31 depends on what the United States and other countries are doing. While legally Japan's contingent can remain deployed through September 2009, extending beyond that will require legislation which is "unlikely to be passed." Japan is interested in learning more about what it would mean to become a third-party to any U.S.-Iraq defense cooperation agreement, but would need to know much more before seriously considering such an option. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Japan currently has deployed three C-130 ASDF transport aircraft in Kuwait, supported by approximately 200 personnel, which fly missions into Iraq in support of MNF-I and the United Nations. The enabling legislation authorizing this deployment is valid through September 2009. The current basic plan, which is required by the legislation to govern the deployment, will expire in July 2008, and must be renewed by the Cabinet in order to continue the mission beyond that date.

¶3. (C) Embassy Tokyo Political Officer met with MOFA National Security Division Principal Deputy Director Shingo Miyamoto and desk officer Takahiro Sato on February 25 to discuss the issues raised in reftel. Miyamoto's responses to the questions posed are as follows:

-- What are Japan's plans to continue to deploy forces in 2009?

Japan has only just started to consider what actions it will take when the UNSCR expires at the end of December 2008. However, the ASDF mission is legally authorized to continue through September 2009. It is very likely the Cabinet will renew the basic plan required by the law this July when the current plan expires. It is possible to renew this plan for any length of time, and it is probable it would be extended through September 2009, when the enabling legislation is set to expire. However, Miyamoto pointed out that even if the basic plan is extended, it is still possible for Japan to terminate the mission and withdraw its assets at any time. Whether Japan continues to deploy its forces beyond December 31 will depend very much on what the U.S. and other nations decide to do.

-- What legal and political conditions are required without a Chapter VII resolution?

Miyamoto and Sato believe there are no legal impediments to continuing the ASDF deployment through September 2009, when the special measures law expires. However, the odds of getting this legislation renewed beyond that date are very steep. The current political situation in Japan does not auger well for the passage of legislation to extend the deployment. Although the executive branch of the government would clearly like to remain involved, since the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lost control of the Upper House of the Diet to the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) last July, the deployment of Japanese forces in support of OIF and OEF have become politically charged issues. As a result of this change in the political winds, it took the government months of very tough political fighting to win renewal of the law that permits Japan to support OEF. It is unrealistic to expect, said Miyamoto, that after expending so much political capital to extend that mission, the government is ready to face the same, if not a tougher fight to extend the mission in Iraq. He noted the Iraq mission is considerably less popular among the public than is the Afghanistan mission.

-- What conditions are useful but not absolutely necessary to facilitate a continued presence?

The main thing the Japanese need from the U.S., said Miyamoto, is a detailed understanding of our intentions and plans. The Japanese would like the U.S. to convey to them our wishes of them so they can make an informed decision on how to proceed. In addition, the actions of other nations

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will weigh on the Japanese decision-making process. A request for continued presence by the Iraqis would be helpful, as would be a request from the United Nations that Japan continue to support its mission with ASDF assets. However, Miyamoto strongly suggested that if the U.S. or others are going to ask Japan for continued assistance, that such requests come at the working level. If the President were to publicly call on Japan to stay, it would get very uncomfortable and become potentially very embarrassing for all involved if this turned out to be a request Japan is unable to fulfill for domestic political reasons.

-- Do the foreign policy and defense establishments differ in their assessment of the legal or political hurdles?

Miyamoto said he does not believe there is much difference between the MOFA and MOD positions on the Iraq mission. However, he noted there has not been any recent serious discussion about this topic between the two. He also predicted that MOD is more likely to be opposed to a continued deployment, as they are the ones shouldering the risks and burdens of the operation. Again, he reiterated that no one at either MOD or MOFA has been giving serious thought yet to extending this mission.

-- What role must the legislature play, and how much lead time would be necessary for it to act?

If the ASDF is to remain in Kuwait beyond September 2009, the legislature must extend the current special measures law or enact a new law. Given the current political alignments in Japan, Miyamoto predicts it will be "very, very difficult" to get favorable results from the Diet. "As long as the DPJ controls the Upper House, it is hard to imagine an extension, particularly without a UN mandate", he said. As it is, the DPJ has been trying unsuccessfully to introduce legislation to end the mission now. If it has the power to prevent the renewal or extension of the current law, all signs indicate it would do so.

-- Is Japan interested in benefiting as a third-party from a

U.S.-Iraq defense cooperation agreement?

Japan would be willing to consider this, but it needs to know much more about what this would mean and how it would work before it can begin to give this serious thought, Miyamoto said.

¶4. (C) Miyamoto also asked for further information on the timing of our proposed agreement with the Iraqis and said that some in Tokyo are skeptical that the U.S. will be able to successfully reach an agreement with the Iraqis, particularly if such an agreement has to be approved by the Iraqi parliament. He also said he believes the U.S. announcement that the MNF-I mandate would not be renewed could serve to erode the coalition, giving some participants a convenient excuse to pull their forces out. If this begins to take place, Miyamoto said it will be critical to portray these withdrawals as a sign of success, rather than retreat. That is, the public message must be that countries are withdrawing troops because their missions have been successful and they are no longer needed, as the Iraqis are now able to fill in the slack on their own.
SCHIEFFER